THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AgWRAP)
DRAFT Fiscal Year 2013 Detailed Implementation Plan
August 2012

Background

The North Carolina Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program was authorized through Session Law 2011-145, and became effective on July 1, 2011. This program, herein referred to as AgWRAP, was established to assist farmers and landowners in doing any one or more of the following:

- Identify opportunities to increase water use efficiency, availability and storage;
- Implement best management practices (BMPs) to conserve and protect water resources;
- Increase water use efficiency;
- Increase water storage and availability for agricultural purposes.

AgWRAP is administered by the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission and implemented through local soil and water conservation districts. The Commission is required to meet with stakeholders annually to gather input on AgWRAP's development and administration. This year the AgWRAP Review Committee was created, and numerous agencies, organizations, and partners that participate in this committee met regularly to develop recommendations for Commission consideration for this program. AgWRAP was allocated $1,000,000 in FY2012 and $500,000 in FY2013 in non-recurring state appropriations, of which up to 15% of funds can be used by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and districts to provide technical and engineering assistance, and to administer the program. The same cost list for program conservation practices will be used for both PY2012 and PY2013.

Fiscal Year 2013 Allocation Strategy

The Commission will use all FY2013 funding for a competitive state application process for building new agricultural water supply ponds: $425,000 (100% of available BMP funding, 85% of available funding) Funding for the state allocation is only available for the agricultural water supply pond BMP.

Program Guidelines

AgWRAP will be implemented using a pilot approach for this second year, and rule drafting will begin this year based on program implementation experience.

The agricultural water definition, from Protecting Agriculture Water Resources in North Carolina Strategic Plan (February 2011) will be used to determine eligibility for AgWRAP.

> *Agricultural water is considered to be any water on farms, from surface or subsurface sources, that is used in the production, maintenance, protection or on-farm preparation or treatment of agriculture commodities or products as necessary to grow and/or prepare them for on-farm use or transfer into any form of trade as is normally done with agricultural plant or animal commerce.* This expressly includes any on-farm cleaning or processing to make the agricultural product ready for sale or other transfer to any consumer in a usable form. It does not include water used in the manufacture or extended processing of plants or animals or their products when the processor is not the grower or producer and/or is beyond the first handler of the farm product.

All eligible operations must have been in existence for more than one year, and expansions to existing operations are eligible for the program.

The percent cost share for all BMPs is 75%. Limited resource and beginning farmers and farmers enrolled in Enhanced Voluntary Agriculture Districts are eligible to receive 90% cost share. The contract maintenance period of the majority of practices is 10 years.

Soil and water conservation districts can adopt additional guidelines for the program as they implement AgWRAP locally.

Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Goals

I. Conduct a competitive state allocation for new agricultural water supply/reuse ponds
   a. Fund a minimum of one pond per geographic area: Coastal Plain, Piedmont, Mountains
   b. Fund a minimum of 25 ponds with this year's appropriated funding.
   c. Distribute funding for ponds among the following agricultural sectors identified in the Protecting Agriculture Water Resources in North Carolina Strategic Plan (February 2011): aquaculture, field crops, forestry, fruit and vegetable, green industry, livestock and poultry (and forages and drinking water for same).

II. Implement Job Approval Authority Process for AgWRAP BMPs
   a. Expand job approval categories for investigations and evaluations.
   b. Provide training for district employees to earn job approval.
   c. Maintain the job approval database.

III. Conduct training for districts
   a. Continue to train districts on the program.
   b. Provide training and support on the North Carolina Water Needs Assessment Tool.
   c. Maintain the AgWRAP website (http://www.ncagr.gov/swc/agwrap.htm) with all relevant information.

Best Management Practices

(1) Agricultural water supply/reuse pond: Constructing agricultural ponds for water supply for irrigation or livestock watering. Benefits may include water supply, erosion control, flood control, and sediment and nutrient reductions from farm fields. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years.

(2) Agricultural pond sediment removal**:** Remove sediment from existing agricultural ponds to increase water storage capacity. Benefits may include water supply, erosion control, flood control, and sediment and nutrient reductions from farm fields. The minimum life expectancy is 1 year. Cooperators are ineligible to reapply for assistance for this practice for a period of 10 years; unless the sedimentation is occurring due to no fault of the cooperator.

(3) Agricultural pond repair/retrofit: Repair or retrofit of existing agricultural pond systems. Benefits may include water supply, erosion control, flood control, and sediment and nutrient reductions from farm fields. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years.

(4) Conservation Irrigation Conversion: Modifies an existing overhead spray irrigation system to increase the efficiency and uniformity of irrigation water application. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years.

(5) Micro-irrigation System: An environmentally safe system for the conveyance and distribution of water, chemicals and fertilizer to agricultural fields for crop production. A micro-irrigation system is for frequent application of small quantities of water on or below the soil surface: as drops, tiny streams or miniature spray through emitters or applicators placed along a water delivery line. This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to efficiently and uniformly apply irrigation water and maintain soil moisture for plant growth. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years.

(6) Well: Constructing a drilled, driven or dug well to supply water from an underground source. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years.